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The first old master I bought, an alluringly mellow profile of a Doge, was wrong, and it was one of the best purchases I ever made. And after more than twenty years of collecting, only recently, I confidently bought a skilfully revamped primitive. The incident is worth recounting, for it illustrates in small the insidious nature of "improved" originals. The picture was a little enthroned Madonna of Giottesque type. The figures at the side of the throne were old, the Madonna's head palpably repainted in a better style. I bought the panel expecting to find the Madonna's original head beneath the repaint. But there was no head there, only old gold ground. Apparently the gable top of the panel had been injured and a new gable made from another old panel had been spliced on to serve as a specious ground for the new head. I had docilely drawn all the inferences the forger intended me to draw. The moral is of course that the sides of old panels should be inspected as carefully as the backs and fronts.

No collector can read this book without profit. It is delightfully done, and so complete that I note no omissions except that of the notorious Venetian imitators, Pietro della Vecchia and Sebastiano Ricci. Numerous cuts show the excellence of the work of imitators and forgers up to today, thus asserting vividly the perils of modern amateurism. The only safeguards are caution, experience, and taste. Having these abundantly, the collector will not often be fooled, and will learn much from his occasional mishaps. In collecting, as in war, the balance between the offensive and defensive is never permanently upset, but the moment emphatically calls for such strengthening of the defensive as Signor Nobili's charming book affords.

Frank Jewett Mather

THE PLAY OF SIBYL CASSANDRA. BY GEORGIANA GODDARD KING. BRYN MAWR NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS, II. 12°. BRYN MAWR, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE, 1921.

The interrelation of art and literature at different periods in the world's history has been much discussed in a general way during recent years, but very little that is definite and tangible has as yet been achieved in this field of investigation. Miss King's admirable little monograph is therefore a welcome contribution, especially in its concrete results, to one of the most important phases of the subject, the connection between art and drama in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Her essential purpose is an interpretation of the rather enigmatical *Play (Auto) of the Sibyl Cassandra* by the Portuguese dramatist of the early sixteenth century, Gil Vicente, who belongs also to Spain because the great majority of his dramatic pieces are written, in whole or in part, in Castilian; but, without any serious discursiveness, she has lightly and pleasantly woven into her essay an imposing array of significant and erudite information on the place of the Prophets and Sibyls in ritual, literature, painting, and sculpture.

According to the pastoral and even popular tone that Gil Vicente is prone to give to his compositions, he represents the Sibyl Cassandra as a shepherdess refusing marriage with the shepherd Solomon (!) despite the exhortations of her uncles, Moses, Abraham, and Isaiah, and her aunts, the Persian, Erythraean, and Cimmerian Sibyls; the reason for Cassandra's obduracy is her impracticable desire to be the virgin of whom through inspiration she knows that the Christian God will be born. With a mass of cogent evidence Miss King explains the presence of Solomon by reference to the frequent mediæval identification of Cassandra, who was occasionally treated as one of the Sibyls, with the Queen of Sheba, and she enumerates a series of examples from the sculpture of the Middle Ages in which the Wise Man, Solomon, and the Wise Woman, a vague confusion

of the Sibyl and the Queen of Sheba, stand side by side. The appearance of the other Sibyls and the worthies of the Old Testament in Vicente's drama she refers to that general mediæval tradition, especially significant in the Mystery Plays, according to which the Sibyls were conceived as endowed with a power of Christian vaticination equivalent to that of the Prophets. In the course of her exegesis she adds many data to our knowledge of the evolution of the Mystery Play from the ecclesiastical liturgies, particularly in her discussion of the participation, in the Christmas services, of a person acting the rôle of a Sibyl as harbinger of the Last Judgment; and her general treatment of the Sibyls in art and literature at the end of the monograph provides a useful and well-chosen compendium. The most interesting parallel to the *Auto* that she adduces is the Roumanian folk-tale, based upon a Greek prototype, which represents a Sibyl, here the sister of Solomon, as clinging to the virginal state for fifty years in the hope that Christ might be born from her. All this tradition and material, of course, Gil Vicente has sifted and combined into a work of original merit, by a sprightly invention all his own, and yet the problem of the play's meaning is difficult enough to have justified Miss King in utilizing it as a text for a dissertation that will prove valuable not only to literary scholars but also to students of Christian iconography.

She has also made it hard for a reviewer to perform his conventional duty of picking some flaws. Doubtless Vicente's Prophets and Sibyls wore the sumptuous theatrical costumes upon which she lays so much stress in her argument, but she is too ready to state their existence as a fact when it seems, in reality, only to be inferred from similar interludes and sculptured or painted groups. Whatever the faults of Lycophron, to whose *Alexandra* she alludes in examining the ancient conception of the Sibyls, his fame or at least notoriety demands a more adequate description than "one Lycophron of Chalkis, a witless poet of the end of the third century;" in any case, "witless" is the last adjective that should be applied to the oversubtle Lycophron, and he was active not at the end but at the beginning of the third century B. C. One of the most helpful features of these *Bryn Mawr Notes and Monographs* is the marginal employment of captions summarizing the substance of the paragraphs; but, evidently in an effort to break away from the lifeless diction of ordinary scholarship, Miss King sometimes indulges in picturesque headings that perplex rather than aid the reader. It is pleasant, however, to have her err in this direction when here and there she vouchsafes in the margin additional information. The same desire for less stilted language occasionally results in obscurity, as when, on page 37, it is not clear whether the Sibyl or the Queen of Sheba is smiling at Solomon, or on page 44, one cannot readily see to which "legend in learned literature" Gil Vicente may have been indebted. Yet such infinitesimal defects are the negligible vices of a great virtue, for like Ruskin, though her hand is less heavy, Miss King has really achieved an expository style that delights as well as instructs. In her earlier and much longer monograph, *The Way of St. James*, the rambling manner is perhaps somewhat exaggerated; in the present essay sound learning and charm of presentation are in pleasing balance.

Chandler R. Post

THE ÆSTHETIC BASIS OF GREEK ART OF THE FIFTH AND FOURTH CENTURIES B. C. BY RHYS CARPENTER.  
 BRYN MAWR NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS, I. 263 PP. BRYN MAWR, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE; NEW YORK.  
 LONGMANS, GREEN & CO., 1921.

The new series of *Bryn Mawr Notes and Monographs* starts its existence admirably with this little volume. The format is the same as that employed by the Hispanic Society, the Museum of the American Indian of New York, and the American Numismatic Society,